

**Remarks on Plans for Release of
United States Navy Aircraft
Crewmembers in China**

April 11, 2001

Good morning. I'm pleased to be able to tell the American people that plans are underway to bring home our 24 American service men and women from Hainan Island.

This morning the Chinese Government assured our American Ambassador that the crew would leave promptly. We're working on arrangements to pick them up and to bring them home.

This has been a difficult situation for both our countries. I know the American people join me in expressing sorrow for the loss of life of a Chinese pilot. Our prayers are with his wife and his child.

I appreciate the hard work of our Ambassador to China, Joseph Prueher, and his entire Embassy team, who worked tirelessly to solve this situation. The American people, their families, and I are proud of our crew, and we look forward to welcoming them home.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:25 a.m. in the James S. Brady Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Ruan Guoqino, widow of Chinese pilot Wang Wei.

**Remarks at Concord Middle School
in Concord, North Carolina**

April 11, 2001

Thank you all very much. Okay. "Dr. O," thank you for your hospitality. It's an honor to be here. I want to thank you all for coming. Before I talk about a subject dear to my heart, which is education, and before I recognize all the distinguished guests, I do want to say that right after my visit here, I am going to meet with the family of Petty Officer Third Class Steven Blocher.

As you know, Steven is one of our 24 service men and women in China. I'm really looking forward to letting Steven's family know that we're in the process of bringing their son home. Steven grew up in Charlotte, and I know this entire Charlotte area and I know

this entire community joins in looking forward to welcoming him home.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to tell the Blochers how much America appreciates their son's patriotism and service to his country and how much we appreciate the service of our men and women in uniform throughout the world.

Situations such as this remind us how much our military personnel and their families sacrifice for our freedom. It also reminds me, it's such an honor to be the Commander in Chief of such wonderful people.

It's also an honor to be here in the great State of North Carolina. I've got a lot of friends here, and I'm grateful. It's also good to get out of Washington, DC, on a regular basis. It kind of reminds us that there is—it helps us stay in touch with reality. It's important to listen to people who are on the frontlines of making their communities a much better place. And there's no better place to listen and to say thanks than our schools all across America, where people are working their heart out to make a difference in the lives of our children. So first, I want to thank all the teachers who are here.

I don't know if you know this—and I'm sorry the First Lady is not with us; she's heading down to Texas for the Easter break; I'm following shortly thereafter, I want you to know. [*Laughter*] One of her missions, besides making sure every child can read, is to remind folks about how important it is and what an important profession teaching is, that teaching is a noble profession, and that for the youngsters who are looking for something to do after college: Become a teacher. Or, for those who have just gotten out of the military: Become a teacher.

We need good teachers in America. We need people to understand what an important job it is. So for those of you who are thinking about something to do when you get out of junior high, then high school, then college, give teaching a shot. It will not only change some child's life; it will change your life for the better, as well.

It's good to see Phil Kirk. Phil, thank you very much. I was honored to be escorted around the school by a man I proudly called "Mr. President," Graham Boone. I appreciate Senator Edwards being here. Senator,